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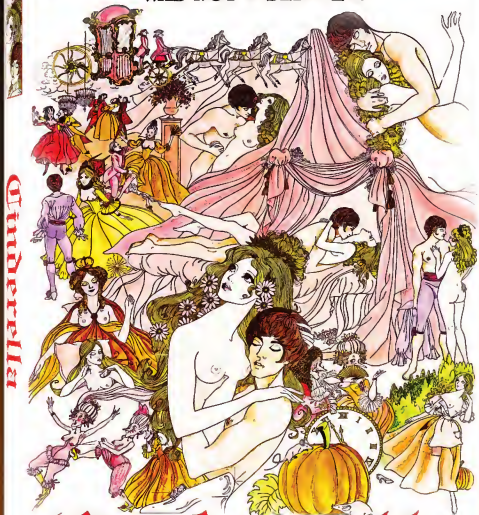


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DELIRIOUS WORDS

I got turned on to the wild world of Jess Franco back in my GOREZONE days, reading that mag—which, in my FANGORIA life, I have since resurrected with some degree of success—and thrilling to the investigations of Tim Lucas in his Video Watchdog column. At the time, I was in my early teens, it was the late 1980s and contemporary horror just didn't do it for me. I had been watching strange cinema since I was a child and had forged esoteric tastes—certainly wilder than what the local theaters were churning out at the time, anyway. I began exploring European horror films, specifically Italian, and there I found works of great style, music and otherworldly violence. Movies that refused to conform to the North American genre ideal, and yet still had enough domestic DNA to be familiar.



When Lucas began writing about Franco in both that amazing column and the pages of FANGORIA, I was fascinated. There was a tale to tell here. Here was a man who had studied and worked with Orson Welles and had branched off into making macabre, salacious movies, apparently sating an obsession to point a camera at anything, at all times and as often as he could. Here was a man with recurring obsessions, fetishes and eroticism—the latter of which, being a teenage boy, I was specifically interested in. There was a mystery to be solved here. Myriad pseudonyms, alternate cuts, pornography, notoriety, bad reviews, rapturous cult following, sliding-scale budgets, international casts, psychedelia, lesbian vampires...it was all too much. Too exciting. Too enticing. I had to know more...

The next step in my Franco education came from Pete Tombs and Cathal Tohill's legendary IMMORAL TALES book, which I purchased in the early 1990s, and it was that remarkable tome that put my now-insatiable fixation on Franco into sharp focus. IMMORAL TALES humanized Franco. Told his story. Broke down his personal life and analyzed his vision. What a great book. And Franco, what a great filmmaker.

And yes, Franco is a great filmmaker. In fact, I cite Franco as one of the most important filmmakers in cinema history. Now, for those of you who are perhaps only casual Franco fans, let me head you off at the pass before you drop one of those EL CONDE DRACULA papier-mâché boulders on my head: I'm not saying that all Franco movies are great. In fact, some aren't even very good. But many are sublime, and almost all boast bursts of genius. No, what makes Franco so vital a name in the art of making magic shadows is his persistence of vision and use of the craft as an extension of his love of jazz music. Gorgeous Franco works like FEMALE VAMPIRE and A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD are maybe not good horror movies by pedestrian standards, but they are most certainly Franco masterpieces, shining examples of the fevered "first draft cinema" that makes his output so rewarding.

When I took over as editor of FANGORIA in early 2010, Franco had quietly, almost invisibly released another personal film called PAULA-PAULA that was just as erotic and strange as his golden-age work. I pursued the story, and was given Franco's phone number to call and interview him. No one else seemed to be covering PAULA-PAULA, and he was more than happy to talk about it. I called the Madrid number. His wife and muse, Lina Romay, answered. I shivered. Here she was—the first lady of Euroleaze. Lovely. Sweet. Cordial. After some words, she passed the phone to Jess. We spent the next half hour talking cinema, his latest film and his new love for American television, specifically shows like CRIMINAL MINDS, which he thought was a masterpiece. It was a defining moment of my journey. Two years later, Lina would die of cancer—and Jess was not long to follow.

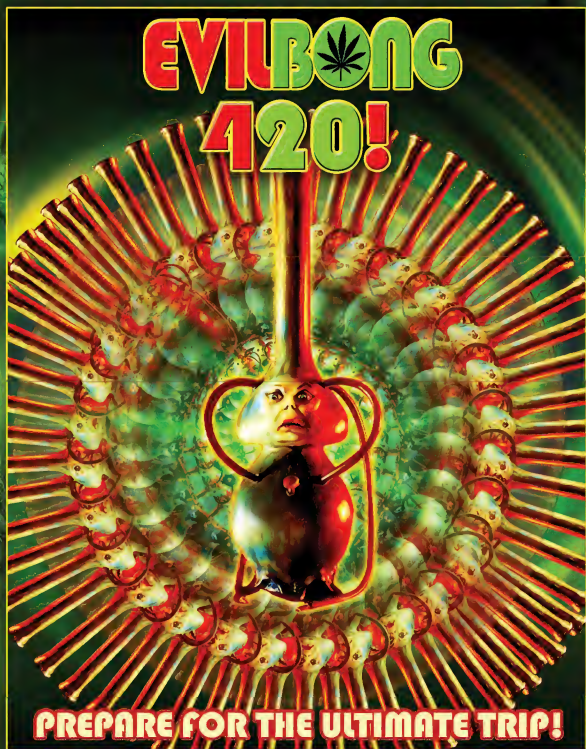
It's thrilling for me to be able to work with Charles Band making DELIRIUM magazine. Because it was Band's Force Video imprint that gave me my first taste—as it did many of us—of Franco back in the '80s, with (among many other titles) the alternate version of FEMALE VAMPIRE, retitled EROTIKILL by Band. When Charlie told me he had the rights to the Erwin Dietrich/Franco library, I lost it. I helped curate the titles in Full Moon's new Jess Franco DVD collection, and decided to celebrate by putting one of Dietrich and Franco's finest collaborations, 1976's JACK THE RIPPER, on the cover. So here's to adventures in strange cinema, and the often surprising paths an interest in such things can take you.

And here's to the late, great Jess Franco. The embodiment of indie film-making spirit.

—Chris Alexander, Editor
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Ripping Yarn

Legendary producer Erwin C. Dietrich backed Franco, calmed Kinski and made a masterpiece in the process.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

In the U.S., our own Charles Band is recognized as one of the most prolific and passionate purveyors of exploitation film entertainment in history, second only perhaps to the inimitable Roger Corman. The European mirror of Band and Corman's rich, weird legacy has to be the output of Swiss-born movie mogul Erwin C. Dietrich. Initially trained as an actor in the 1950s, Dietrich instead found his path as a writer, director and producer, steering dozens upon dozens of remarkable thrillers, soft porn and horror titles and distributing many of them all over the globe, to great financial and occasionally even critical success.

Dietrich's productions were often—by low-budget standards—lavish affairs, and helmed by such revered genre-movie stalwarts as Fabrizio de Angelis, Riccardo Freda and Antonio Margheriti, featuring

international name casts. Among the over 100 films Dietrich stood behind was the film featured on our cover, the gritty, lush and lurid Jess Franco masterpiece **JACK THE RIPPER** (a.k.a. **DER DIRNENMORDER VON LONDON** and **EROTICO PROFONDO**). It was the first of many Dietrich/Franco collaborations, and is not only the most widely seen (due in no small part to a North American home video presence in the 1980s via Vestron and, later, its presence in that same choppy form in the public-domain DVD dump bins haunting Kmart's across the nation), but certainly among the finest of either auteur's long careers.

JACK THE RIPPER also has the distinction of starring one of the planet's most notorious and controversial (and best) actors, the late Klaus Kinski, here playing the mad Dr. Orloff (a name employed by Franco for his villains since his first horror feature, 1962's **THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF**), a seemingly kindly London MD who slithers around gaslit back alleys by night, murdering and eviscerating prostitutes with surgical precision and psychosexual bloodlust.

Shot quickly in Switzerland and co-starring Franco muse Lina Romay as well as Charlie Chaplin's daughter Josephine, **JACK THE RIPPER**, along with nine other Dietrich/Franco films, will be re-released by Full Moon on DVD this year, fully remastered and restored from a print struck from a new negative. In honor of this respectful treatment of a true Euro-horror masterpiece, **DELIRIUM** invited Dietrich to grace our pages, discuss his career and give us his take on working with



two of fringe cinema's most revered eccentrics.

DELIRIUM: As a child, what sort of films did you gravitate toward?

ERWIN C. DIETRICH: I was born in a small Swiss town in the year 1930. Back then, the chocolate manufacturer Nestlé had a film club called "Fip-Fop-Club," where you could pay your admission with a chocolate wrapping. The club had no age restriction, therefore I watched my very first movie at the age of 6 or 7:



TARZAN THE APE MAN starring Johnny Weissmüller. It did not have that much dialogue, although it was a talkie. But nevertheless, it touched me and I knew for sure: I would dedicate my life to movies and to cinema.

DELIRIUM: What was the German film market like when you came of age?

DIETRICH: After the Second World War, there were no film academies. After my studies in textile engineering in St. Gallen, I went to Zurich to join the newly opened drama school. Without permission, I appeared in small advertising movies made by Central Film, which was noticed, and after two years I was expelled from the school. The German film industry was not very busy after the war, but Italy, on the other hand, had some extremely realistic productions. Like **GERMANY YEAR ZERO** by Roberto Rossellini, with a young German actor called Franz-Otto Krüger. After the movie was made, he visited the drama school and we



KLAUS KINSKI
JACK THE RIPPER
DER DIRNENMORDER VON LONDON



became friends.

DELIRIUM: How did this lead to a professional life in cinema?

DIETRICH: Thanks to the small advertising films I was making at the drama school, I could differentiate between a coffee mill and a camera, and I had knowledge of the film business, too. I knew how a script looked and I took out a subscription to the first German film magazine, *Der Neu Film*. I thought about what could make the people in the four occupation zones happy, and I knew the requirements. One, it had to be an Austrian movie. Two, the famous Vienna Boys Choir had to be in it. Three, the famous Lipizaner Stallions had to be in it. And four, the blonde actress and singer Waltraut Haas had to be in it.

Based on Ludwig Azengruber's play, I wrote the script for what would be my first film, *DER PFARRER VON KIRCHFELD*, and then went to Germany. They even let me star in the movie. But after we did some test shootings with Haas, it just did not work out. So I was left with my role as a producer, and I had to realize that this was one tough job, this movie-making business.

DELIRIUM: Were your early thrillers suc-

cessful outside of Germany?

DIETRICH: At first I continued making movies with a regional background, and my next movie was *DER KÖNIG VON BERNINA*. It was the second adaptation of L.C. Heers' novel, which had already been filmed in 1929 by Ernst Lubitsch as *ETERNAL LOVE*, starring John Barrymore and Camilla Horn. In my version, Waltraut Haas took the leading part. My next projects were comedies for the local Swiss market with popular Swiss comedians like Walter Roderers—I made four films with Walter—and my crime thrillers *DIE NYLONSCHLINGE*, *DER WÜRGER VOM TOWER* and *ST. PAULI: ZWISCHEN NACHT UND MORGEN*. Later I even did a musical called *DIE HAZY OSTERWALD STORY* and an adaptation of James Hadley Chase's novel *A COFFIN FROM HONG KONG*, both for Constantin Film. For Team Film I produced *SCHWARZER MARKT DER LIEBE*, a thriller about girl trafficking. I kept gathering experience in producing and the enormous financial problems that came with it. I realized that literally every single film distribution company in Germany had financial troubles.

So, I bought Elite Film AG, founded in Switzerland 1927, which had the permit

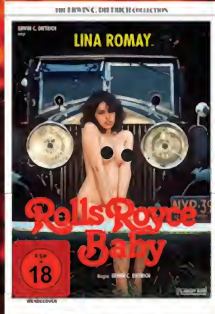
to import 10 movies per year. In addition, I founded the Ascot-Avis Filmverleih GmbH in Germany, for which I produced, too. As the company was of Swiss origin, these productions were added to our Swiss contingent. The second movie I made for Ascot, *DIE NICHTER DER FRAU OBERST*, was such a huge success and paid out so well, I could clear all my debts and never had to borrow external funds again. Now I was an independent producer in Germany, unsinkable like the *Titanic*; only an iceberg could stop me! I kept producing and directing up to 10 movies a year.

DELIRIUM: When did you first realize that sexuality and eroticism in cinema was profitable?

DIETRICH: With the huge success of *DIE NICHTER DER FRAU OBERST*, I realized that erotic movies could be very successful and long-lasting for weeks, even in sophisticated movie theaters, which meant a lot of money. Many years later I did a remake of it, with different actors, shot at the same locations, with the same director of photography and with more eroticism. Fortunately, I had no trouble getting a proper age rating for it. Since 2014, both versions have been available on DVD and Blu-ray.

DELIRIUM: You adopted several pseudonyms for your work, depending on the type





of film and your creative role. Why did you feel the need to use pseudonyms?

DIETRICH: I did the writing and the production, pretty much everything but camerawork and composing. This is why I used pseudonyms, but I never hid that it was me behind them.

DELIRIUM: Did you prefer to direct or produce?

DIETRICH: It did not matter. I always loved working on a movie—on something everlasting and global, just like **TARZAN**. Of course, it had to pay out too. That is why the English and French dubbing, which was done in Brussels, was always an important part of our production budget.

DELIRIUM: Let's talk about Jess Franco. How did you become aware of him?

DIETRICH: To sell our movies in the Italian market, together with my director of photography and associate Peter Baumgartner, I founded the distribution company Prestige Film Srl. in Rome. Bruno Mattei was in charge of the dubbing. Jess Franco called our Italian CEO Grazia Frigerio and sold him his new movie **PORNO POP**, with Lina Romay. We

brought it onto the big screen, entitled **HEIßE BERÜHRUNGEN**, and it was quite a success. Jess wanted Grazia to arrange a meeting with me in Zurich. So we met for the first time, and our first mutual movie, **BARBED WIRE DOLLS**, was shot. I did not like it, but it was very successful. In any case, in three years Jess made 16 movies for me, and he told me that these were the best years of his life. In 2009, Jess was awarded the Goya Award for his life's work, mainly for **JACK THE RIPPER** and **LOVE LETTERS**

OF A PORTUGUESE NUN. Jess was my friend, and our shared love for movies made us close. Jess knew every single movie on this planet, and he knew many people in person, like the French author Jean-Claude Carrière, who was nominated for a few Oscars. He wrote the first script for Jess Franco's **JACK THE RIPPER**, and introduced Jess to director Luis Buñuel.

DELIRIUM: Did you spend much time socially with Jess and Lina Romay?

DIETRICH: Yes! I met with Jess and Lina many times. Wonderful people. And I even shot a very successful movie with Lina called **ROLLS-ROYCE BABY**.

DELIRIUM: **JACK THE RIPPER** is a masterpiece. Was it shot quickly?

DIETRICH: I truly believe that **JACK THE RIPPER** is a masterpiece. I perfectly remember when Jess came up to me with the idea of telling this story in a new way, starring Klaus Kinski. I was against it; because of the labor union I knew from British Hong Kong, I did not want to shoot in London. But Jess already had all the settings defined in the city of Zurich, and we could shoot just around the corner.

DELIRIUM: Franco and Kinski had worked together several times previously. There are so many stories about Kinski's temperament; did he and Franco have a happy collaboration?

DIETRICH: I never had any problems with Klaus Kinski during the shoots. This leads me to the conclusion that all his documented outbursts were presumably justified. Maybe he had not been paid his fee in time. Fortunately, I used a letter of credit from the largest bank of Switzerland to pay the actors' fees. Therefore, Klaus did not lose his temper during any of our mutual productions. We got on very, very well. Together with Kinski, Lee van Cleef, Ernest Borgnine, Lewis Collins and director Antonio Margheriti, we shot the mercenary movies **CODE NAME: WILD GESE** and **KOMMANDO LEOPARD**.

DELIRIUM: Are you yourself a fan of violent horror films?

DIETRICH: Well, calling me a fan is pushing it a bit, but I do like them.

DELIRIUM: When you look back at your incredible career, are you proud of your body of work? Any regrets, or films you would like to have made?

DIETRICH: My name stands for over 100 movies, and I am very happy that they still have a vast and growing fan base. Today, being 84 years old, I can still work with a small team within the company, so I do not get cabin fever. Right now, Elite Film AG is the leading independent distribution company in Switzerland. It is now run by my children, Karin and Ralph, who just produced and released the international blockbuster **NORTHMEN: A VIKING SAGA** into cinemas all over the world.



DIARY OF A MADWOMAN

Swiss actress Nikola Weisse matched madness with Klaus Kinski in *JACK THE RIPPER*.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

Swiss actress Nikola Weisse is a goddess of the stage, with over 40 years of experience. And yet, despite her presence and professional prestige, Weisse has not appeared in many feature films. She's a real actor's actor, a purist, a grand dame of the theater.

But back in 1976, while producer Erwin C. Dietrich was putting together the film that would become Jess Franco's *JACK THE RIPPER*, he poked around the local theater circuit and found Weisse, whom he thought would be perfect as the loyal (and more than slightly crazy) housekeeper Frieda—a fine lady who loves her master, the good Dr. Orloff (Klaus Kinski), and cheerfully, dutifully, disposes of his nocturnal female spoils amidst a reasonable facsimile of the Thames.

But although Weisse is excellent in the film and it is most certainly a cult classic, when *DELIRIUM* contacted her in Zurich recently, she was more than a bit surprised that anyone else even remembered *JACK THE RIPPER* at all.

"This is more than a little bit funny," Weisse said of our cold call. "It was so long ago that I made this film. No one talks to me about *JACK THE RIPPER*, ever! When you contacted me, I watched the film again on the Internet in French and I thought, 'Hey, it's not so bad!' and memories of making it came rushing back. The movie was very quickly made, you know, and everyone spoke a different language. A real international production."

Originally planned by Franco to shoot in Portugal, the production was moved by Dietrich to Zurich, resulting in an eerie version of London that adds a touch of surrealism to the film. And, like almost all Franco films, it was shot quickly.

"I was working for the Weimar Theater

and was performing in the evening," Weisse recalls, "and Dietrich said, 'Come quickly, we'll shoot your scenes and you can go.' The entire movie was made in eight or nine days, and all of my scenes were shot in two days. If I must be honest, the treatment was not very good. It was simplistic and old-fashioned, with trite explanations of the killer's desires based on some problems he was having with his mother. But Dietrich was a very good producer, Franco was a good director and it was a stroke of genius to employ Kinski; it added cinematic value. Otherwise, the film was made like theater. The way most

Weisse—to support Kinski, who brings that trademark twitch and haunted stare that has long secured his legacy as one of the greatest cult-film performers in history. With that legacy comes infamous tales of on-set tantrums and worse, but Weisse claims the actor was rather lovely.

"Kinski was not nasty at all; to the contrary," the actress says. "I mean, he may have been in a slightly bad mood because at this point in his career, he was tired of making movies like this. I had a scene with him in a boat, and off-camera he asked me, 'Why are you doing this movie?'



of us acted was in the manner that we played on stage."

JACK THE RIPPER has a great supporting cast, including Herbert Fux and, of course, Franco muse Lina Romay. But of course, all are present—including

and I said, 'For the same reasons you are!' He said, 'I'm making lots of money. I'm doing this for the money, but what are you getting from this?' I said I was doing it for the experience, to work with him and I wanted to learn about cinema. He was kind; I think he even respected me. At one point, he and I were talking about his reputation of being rather crazy. To prove a point, he grabbed two women, grabbed their breasts and became a monster. But then he looked at me and there was a twinkle in his eye. He had an image to maintain, and he played to it. But he was tired. He told me that when he made enough money, he was just going to buy a boat and sail away and get away from cinema altogether. Of course, that was not to happen."

After *JACK THE RIPPER*, Weisse had a handful of film roles, but ultimately stayed on the stage. "You see, the German film industry developed, but not the Swiss, so I stayed in theater, where my heart was. And I have no regrets about doing so."



The Jess Franco Collection: An Appreciation

By JAMES BICKERT



ORLOF (1962). Cinematic head case Klaus (AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD) Kinski is top-billed, so scratch any suspenseful reveal concerning history's favorite ho-hacker. We all know it has to be Kinski, right? This is a straightforward production that resembles a low-rent Hammer cash-in—most evident during comic-relief sequences with the secondary characters. The trademark Franco excesses of lens manipulation and repetitive cutaways are minimal, and he accomplishes a Gothic and ritualistic tone throughout—until the final reel slices into some early Herschell Gordon Lewis-inspired carnage and incest-fueled sexual assault. This is one of Kinski's more toned-down performances, but nonetheless an enjoyable one. The real treat here is Mr. Bridger (Hans Gaugler), an absurdly perceptive blind man, and Charlie (Herbert Fux), a blackmailing fisherman, who are always one step ahead of the oblivious Inspector Selby (Andreas Mannkopff).

LOVE LETTERS OF A PORTUGUESE NUN (1977)

From a viewer's standpoint, Franco gives the impression of having been extremely motivated to get his film elements working cohesively when a predetermined target lay in his crosshairs.



Who better to climb a bell tower for than the Catholic Church? Working from a Dietrich script, Uncle Jess kicks open the "Holy Door," all guns blazing. Poor innocent Maria (Susan Hemingway) is just try-

Last month, Full Moon announced its partnership with Erwin C. Dietrich, a match made in exploitation-film heaven wherein we have licensed 10 of the most revered Dietrich/Jess Franco collaborations for domestic DVD release. These will be fully uncut discs with transfers struck from Dietrich's own new HD masters, all the better to observe Franco's dreamy, dirty sex and obsessive violence. In honor of these releases, filmmaker and Franco scholar James Bickert (DEAR GOD NO!) put figurative pen to page and spilled his thoughts on some of the Mas-

ter's greatest works...

JACK THE RIPPER (1976)

Notwithstanding a few hiccups in period-appropriate costume design, JACK THE RIPPER is one of Franco's most atmospheric labors from the Dietrich era. Unlike the majority of Ripper/police-procedural films, which hide the killer's identity, Franco's script concentrates on the psychology of ol' Jack—"mommy was a prostitute" Freudian issues blended with homage to his own THE AWFUL DR.

ing to fight off the advances of sexed-up village boys on her dirt farm. When horny Father Vicente (William Berger) is voyeur to her predicament, he hornswoogles the little gal's God-fearing mother into paying a dowry and shipping her to nun boot camp. Convent penance is ripe for infusing our tale with the Marquis de Sade's JUSTINE—a tale Franco is more than schooled in. This go-round, it's an evil sect of lesbians pimping virgins for the red-hot rocket of Satan (Fox). Maria's only hope is that the Inquisition can help unmask the satanic order, but the soiled sheets of promise are quickly turned for the worse when the pious interpreters of the "Good Book," just as corrupt as our antagonist, sentence her to burn at the stake.

For Franco, this is a lavish production with an abundance of extras on hand. The Holy Grail in this experience is the performance of Hemingway. Her naïvete and suffering bring an empathy that castrates titillation and drives the anti-religious message home like an RPG to the Vatican



gate. Sleaze and cough-syrup visuals guide Franco's hedonistic middle finger upward, resulting in a blasphemous classic of the nunsplottation genre.

MARQUIS DE SADE, a.k.a. DORIANA GREY (1976)

Don't be bewildered by the various titles for this film. Despite the obvious connotations, it has nothing to do with the infamous Marquis or Oscar Wilde's THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY. Actually, this is a pornographic film that has more in common with the body-horror output of David Cronenberg. Franco's muse, Lina Romay, portrays lesbian recluse Dorian Gray, who shares a strange connection with her conjoined twin. When they were separated at birth, the sister received all the erogenous zones, turning her into a raging nymphomaniac requiring institutionalization. Doriana was left with the

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inability to feel pleasure and cursed with a vampire-like hunger for oral sex. All the pleasure she performs on her partners is



transferred to her sister's orgasm center and leaves the recipients dead, presumably with smiles on their faces. If you thought the Romay bush zooms from EROTIKILL, a.k.a. THE FEMALE VAMPIRE (1973), were outrageous, here Franco dials all the way in until her clitoris fills the screen! If you want to see a young Lina doing hardcore in heavy color-saturated 35mm, the majority of the running time padded with graphic masturbation, then this is your picture. Surprisingly atmospheric and creepy for a Euro skin flick, it does contain one doozy of an ending, and a Dr. Orloff reference! There's a softcore version, but why bother?

BLUE RITA (1977)

Here is the archetypal Jess Franco flick I relish and adore. An outlandish smorgasbord of striking women doing convoluted Euro-spy shenanigans amidst saxophone-filled lounge numbers. Rita

(Martine Flety) runs a seedy revue packed full of chain-smoking perverts and surreal strip performances. When she isn't exposing the goods, Rita and her ladies moonlight as interrogators for a secret organization. With the aid of a special home brew of "Spanish Fly" super-goo and their natural assets, they sexually torment their male subjects into confessing valuable information. If they can also drain a bank account or two, that's an added bonus.

Like a sexy French comic book come to life on a shoestring budget, **BLUE RITA** is a fun romp full of naked flesh bathed in primary colors. Franco doesn't miss a beat with the camera hijinks, and aggressively milks his fog-machine budget. Franco regular Eric (**WANDA THE WICKED WARDEN**) Falk turns up as a professional boxer and delivers a knee-slapping fight scene that's worth the price of admission. **BLUE RITA** is a healing helping of pop-art perversion that only Franco can deliver.



SLAVES, a.k.a.

SWEDISH NYMPHO SLAVES (1977)

This reworking of Dietrich's **WHITE SKIN ON THE BLACK MARKET** (1969) and **PENTHOUSE PLAYGIRLS** (1972), among others, has Princess Armida (Romay) seducing young women and then getting them hooked on a mescaline smack. Once she strips these lost souls of their former selves, Armida reprograms them for a brothel life at The Bogoda—filled with jazzy nightclub numbers, of course! Busted by the man, Armida is aided in a prison escape, only to be tortured by the father of a kidnaper victim who was once her lesbian lover.

Told in voiceovers and flashbacks like a film editor's worst nightmare, this is classic quickie Franco, very reminiscent of the haphazard **WOMEN BEHIND BARS** (1975). Jess loves talking parrots, and we're blessed here with a profanity-laden one skilled in a unique form of coitus interruptus. You're going to watch what

Jess wanted to film, script be damned, but at the very least, it's going to be immoral. The sex scenes are unrealistically awkward, at times comical, but don't let that deter you. All the usual suspects (Falk included) are along for the ride—even though the bridge is clearly out of order.

SEXY SISTERS (1977)

Not much of a payoff here, but the ride is a filthy hot. In order to gain control of a family inheritance, Countess Edna Von Stein (Pamela Stanford) hatches an elaborate plot to convince mental-health experts and the executor of her father's will that her stepsister Milly (Karine Gambier) is a schizophrenic nymphomaniac. In cahoots with the Countess is her lover Doctor Barnes and occasional lesbian galpal nurse Sarah. When the orgy-crazed trio aren't busy injecting the chained-up Milly with libido-raising smack, Edna picks up studs at bars to come home and ravish the caged lass—including one of Edna's former lovers who raped Milly as a child! If you like your psychosexual dramas moist and heavy on lens tomfoolery, then open up the raincoat and enjoy this sordid tale.

VOODOO PASSION, a.k.a. CALL OF THE BLOND GODDESS (1977)

After a voiceover condemning your ethnocentric stereotyping of voodoo rituals, Uncle Jess demonstrates that your preconceptions were correct. Susan (Ada Tauler)

lands in Haiti to meet her husband Jack (Jack Taylor) at their new estate, and finds it occupied by lusty, busty sister-in-law Olga (Gambier) and voodoo priestess Ines (Nanda Van Bergen). The end result is a lot of slinking around, fever dreams and a recurring pin-stuck doll to push the viewer from one sex scene to the next. Heavily padded with sonnambulist jazz-inspired voodoo dance sequences on a beach, **VOODOO PASSION** does deliver what it promises, but is best viewed while munching on pharmaceutical popcorn and fighting a bout with the flu. Luckily, all the actresses seem to have developed a hatred toward the wardrobe department.

BARBED WIRE DOLLS (1976)

For his third women-in-prison film (he made nine), Franco money-shots into our seeing holes with a gloriously filthy sting of artistic degeneracy. One thing I've always admired about Franco is his penchant for filling the screen with rotten people doing rotten things, and with **BARBED WIRE DOLLS**, you get that in spades. Maria da Guerra (Romay), accused of killing her incest-crazed father (Franco himself), is tossed into a prison spilling over with sexual deviants. The lesbo Wardress (Monica Swinn) starves, tortures and finger-bangs her inmates into reformation; she's also blackmailing Dr. Costa (Paul Müller), who killed the real prison doctor and assumed his identity for backstage access to sexual perversion. Head prison interrogator Nestor (Falk) implements sleep deprivation, shock treatments and kinky bondage. The island's haphophobic governor (Ronald Weiss) is so horrified by the possibility of being touched, he lets Nestor rape the prisoners for him. Not to worry, the ladies are just as twisted and messed up—junksies, nymphomaniacs and the mentally ill.

It's all as depressing, lurid and preposterous as it sounds. If you long to purchase a first-class ticket to the destruction of your own humanity, this is your malfunctioning airline to emptiness. No opportunity is wasted when torture is involved, and Franco puts the boot heel to any underlying themes of power and cor-

JESS FRANCO GOLDEN GOYA COLLECTION

ERWIN C. DIETRICH

regal
eine NESTOR-FILMPRODUKTION
in Eastman-Film gedreht auf Haiti mit

**VICKY ADAMS
JACK TAYLOR
KARINE GAMBIER**

In einem Film von
JESS FRANCO

EROTIK, WAHN
UND HEXENKULT
AUF EINER
EXOTISCHEN
INSEL

VOODOO PASSION

Ruf der blonden Göttin

FSK

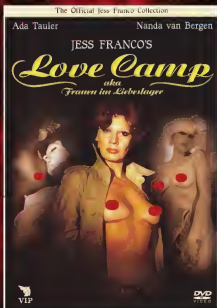
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ASCOT SLITS
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ruption—no matter how transparent they might appear. As in his groundbreaking genre film *99 WOMEN* (1969), the maestro swings his whip for the fences, and his lashes are pure, uncut sadism. The Quaalude-induced interpretive dance number is just one of many jaw-dropping highlights in this dangerous gem of exploitation.



In an unnamed banana republic, women are being kidnapped by the "Independent Revolutionary Front" and forced to sexually service the guerrilla fighters. Angela (Ada Tauler) is abducted on her wedding night and becomes the object of desire for both rebel leader Gino da Guerra (Wal Davis) and the sadistic lesbian camp commander (Van Bergen). Thus begins a softcore drama concerning Angela's torn emotions between Gino and her husband; Gino's longing for Angela's full devotion and the distraction she is causing his command; the wardress'

JESS FRANCO GOLDEN GOYA COLLECTION

ERWIN C. DIETRICH
zeigt

KARINE GAMBIER
und
SUSAN HEMINGWAY

In einem Film von
JESS FRANCO

Frauen für ZELLENBLOCK 9



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ASCOT ELITE
Home Entertainment

power grab over the confused Gino; and her lust for Angela. This is more or less a WIP sexual-fantasy film that avoids most of the humiliation associated with the genre. Franco's erratic cinematic experiments and oppressive tone are sadly missing, but there are some unintentional laughs to be had by a voice actor nailing an impersonation of Corporal "Radar" O'Reilly from M*A*S*H, and another poorly dubbed parrot squawking "All sluts!" and "Filthy whores!" The ladies are pretty easy on the eyes too.

WOMEN IN CELL BLOCK 9 (1978)

In this WIP collaboration, the emphasis is placed less on the captives and more on the captors—reinstated Third World interrogators given a second chance to delight in the one thing that gives them pleasure: the abuse of human beings. Karine (Gambier) is transporting several women tied to the resistance. A tip leads the local wardress, Loba (Dora Doll), to

intercept the human cargo. Our mistress of pain enlists the help of old pal, Dr. Costa (Howard Vernon), to aid in the interrogation. Politics doesn't motivate their actions—the only thrill life offers is the delivering of pain. The first half of the film centers around the abuse of four women (Gambier, Susan Hemingway, Aida Gouveia and Esther Studer) hanging nude from dog collars and being interrogated individually—a gerbil to the genitals being the most obscene method. The last half of the film concentrates on the requisite escape—an extended inmate lesbian bondage orgy, filled with jazz and scat music, to trick a guard with a raging hard-on. Franco regular Vernon (THE AWFUL DR. ORLOF) is sadly missing from most of this collection, but you get a great performance from him here. Overflowing with naked flesh and a lack of crowd-pleasing catharsis, *WOMEN IN CELL BLOCK 9* should adorn every weirdo's shelf.

KINSKI IN THE CRAWLSPACE

Charles Band remembers making a movie with one of cinema's most notorious performers.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

Full Moon's connection to Klaus Kinski isn't just an abstract relegated to the pages of *DELIRIUM*. Back in 1986, when Empire Pictures was at its peak and thriving in Rome, Italy, our pub-



lisher and Empire/Full Moon honcho Charles Band steered a kinky little Kinski effort called *CRAWLSPACE* (currently distributed on Blu-ray by Scream Factory) to screen. Directed by TOURIST TRAP and PUPPET MASTER's David Schmoeller, the film features Kinski as the son of a Nazi war

criminal, driven mad by his father's legacy and taking out his psychosis on the young ladies who live in his claustrophobic apartment building. *CRAWLSPACE* is a great horror film featuring one of Kinski's best genre performances, but it's also notorious for some serious behind-the-scenes drama. Schmoeller has been very, very vocal over the years about the volatile, near-homicidal relationship he had with Kinski on set, but Band hasn't been nearly as chatty.

DELIRIUM figured the time was right to stroll down the hall and knock on our boss' door to pick his brain about one of cinema's most infamous figures.

DELIRIUM: Now, you had made *TROLL* at that same Rome apartment, and you wanted to shoot another movie there. Did you own that apartment, were you just renting it or...

CHARLES BAND: No, no. I wish it was that simple. It's even more awesome. I purchased, under my Empire company, the Dino De Laurentiis studio outside of Rome, the same one where they shot movies like *THE TURTLE* and *BARBARIELLA*. Every single thing we made in Italy, every movie we shot there from '83 to '88, we built at that studio, so some of the sets that were left over from *TROLL* were used. So *CRAWLSPACE* was all shot on a set we built on a soundstage.

DELIRIUM: I have heard that Schmoeller wanted to make this Vietnam-flashback-filled psycho-killer movie akin to *PEEPING TOM*, and you kind of talked him into the Nazi subtext. Why was that?

BAND: Again, like almost everything I did and probably still do, it all started with a great concept and title and poster. I would bring those elements to guys like David Schmoeller or Stuart Gordon, and we would then develop the story. It was actually David, I believe, not me, who then invented this sort of Nazi origin or background story.

But the idea of this creepy guy running around and having built this apartment unit, being able to roll around or crawl around in the crawlspaces and renting the units only to women, that was enough for me. Between the title *CRAWLSPACE* and that concept and when we got Kinski, it was a dream, because I absolutely love Kinski's work and I knew we could make a great movie. I followed Kinski's work, and I always hoped his daughter Nastassja would come visit the set because she was incredibly hot [laughs] and if Klaus was on board, I thought maybe she would come and visit us in Rome. But that never happened.

But the fact that we got Kinski as the creepy dude for *CRAWLSPACE* was a big win, also because at that time, we were

pre-selling almost everything we did to primarily the foreign market, and to have a poster of *CRAWLSPACE* starring Klaus Kinski was a real asset.

DELIRIUM: Were you in Italy at the time they were making the film, or were you in LA?

BAND: Not only was I in Italy, but we were always shooting at least two if not three movies on those soundstages, and it was, for those few years, a very heady experience. If you grew up in this business and dreamed of owning a studio one day, and suddenly you were and movies were being shot on two or three different soundstages, which meant it was two or three different crews...wow. We had a fantastic restaurant on the location, we had a bar where everyone congregated, we had prop and wardrobe and it was just a fantastic few years. I was there, all right.

And the story I've told on the road at conventions I appear at is my best Klaus Kinski story. What happened was, I was there in the administration building, which by itself was probably a 60,000-square-foot, three-story building where Dino had hung out with his wife and commanded his hundred-acre studio years before. Anyway, one day a couple of my production guys ran into the office, freak-ing out, saying there was a huge brawl between David and Kinski, and they thought that Kinski pulled a knife or a gun and I'd better come right away. And you know, my attitude is always, especially in Italy then, that there's so much brouhaha, but at the end of the day, it usually boils down to nothing, a lot of yelling and screaming. But this sounded serious enough that instead of walking calmly to the bar, which was where this was happening and was kind of outside that one soundstage, I moved a little quicker.

Sure enough, as I got there, I was witness to the sort of pinnacle of whatever preceded and made both guys crazy. But Kinski was an incredibly powerful guy. He wasn't large in stature, but he felt 5,000 feet tall and scary. David Schmoeller was not that same kind of character, and I just remember getting closer and seeing Kinski grabbing David by his lapel, and I

don't remember if it was a gun or a knife, but he was threatening him. David was sort of leaned back, and eventually, as I got closer, they looked over and people sort of moved apart and I guess they had said whatever they said to each other and calmed things down, and when I finally actually arrived right there, five feet away, the vibe was, "OK, they're sort of settled their differences." I could tell that Kinski was steaming, and this was all about how a certain shot was to be framed. Kinski was not happy, he wasn't happy with David to begin with; there was something about how a shot was to be framed where Kinski felt it had to be a certain way and I guess against that, and I think Kinski just wanted to kill David, to make sure the shot was the way he wanted it.

DELIRIUM: Schmoeller made this video you've probably seen online or on the Scream Factory Blu-ray, where he tells his own tale about working with Kinski. It's called "Please Kill Mr. Kinski," and he claims that the Italian producers or you or one of the financiers had actually suggested putting a hit out on Kinski...

BAND: Well, that's completely ridiculous. How ridiculous is that? Come on. I don't know where these stories come from and why they're invented, but there was no hit on Kinski. What would the point be? The most ridiculous fabricated story...

DELIRIUM: What did your dad think about him?

BAND: My Dad loved him, and Kinski and I got along great. I don't know if "pussycat" is the right word, but I think he worked on several different levels, and if he felt he was able to intimidate you, it's a whole different thing; that's more European. I believe that anything else, but if he respected you and he felt you were, I guess, on his level of God knows what, he was cool as can be. But if he didn't respect you, he could be a very hard guy to work with and, I think, at his core, dangerous. There was a danger there. With Kinski, I felt he was someone who would pull a knife and stab you if he was pissed off enough. But, yeah, I am so happy to have made at least one movie with Kinski, who is definitely one of my favorite performers.



By JASON BENE

WESTON: As I recall, Rance gave Clint his fatherly advice. As the true professional he is, Clint felt that the role of

DELIRIUM: There's a classic story about the condemned church in South Central Los Angeles that underwent refurbishment for EVILSPEAK. Can you share the details of that?

WESTON: I wanted to reach as high as I could with production values. I didn't just want four walls, a cross and a few pews to represent the chapel. It was a challenge with our budget. The person up to that challenge was Kathy Petty, our production coordinator. She went scouting with a vengeance, even though it wasn't her job. She had a great commitment to the film. Lo and behold, she traveled onto what is



now the Howard Hughes Parkway. The city was preparing to build it, and a long strip of homes and businesses were being demolished, including a church. She found that, and it was basically a crack-house in the middle of a very dangerous area. How she got in and out alive is still a wonder to me, but Kathy was fearless. The city gave us unfettered use; they didn't care what we did. And, boy, did we do stuff! Our art department redressed it, and it looked great. The marble floors were still intact, and they brought in pews and statuary, and built a raised pulpit with a life-size Jesus on the cross above it. The altar had a 30-foot cross dominating it. Stained glass replaced the blown-out windows. It was an incredible feat for a small-budget film! Word got around the neighborhood, and one day the church's previous minister dropped in, saw what we had done, dropped to his knees and with clasped hands declared, "Praise the Lord, my church is back!"

The next day, we dug a tunnel under the altar where the devil's pigs appear and Coopersmith floats up behind them. There was a large explosion that followed and sent a 40-foot fireball into the ceiling. It rolled toward the cameras, and we had to abandon them and flee. They kept rolling



and captured the action. Jesus on the cross and the pulpit were burned to ashes. Pews were burned, statuary was smashed and the stained glass windows exploded. I felt bad for the minister; he never knew what our intentions were. I didn't have the heart to tell him.

DELIRIUM: What was the budget on *EVILSPEAK*, and just how well did it do at the box office?

WESTON: The budget was a shade under \$1 million. We did very well; we were #1 at the box office when we opened, and we sold well on the foreign market. The VHS sales and rentals were spectacular. Worldwide, the film did over \$10 million, and this was before DVD or cable. And a movie ticket in the U.S. was \$2 back in '81. Years later, it was released on DVD, then Blu-ray. It keeps rolling along!

DELIRIUM: I have read reviews that claim *EVILSPEAK* is a "gender ripoff of



CARRIE." For a debut flick, you knocked it out of the park.

WESTON: Thank you for that! Yes, it's a gender spin. But Clint created a memorable character.

DELIRIUM: With all the technological advances over the last few decades, right now would be an opportune time to reboot *EVILSPEAK*. Have you thought about re-making it?

WESTON: Listen, I am still around and keeping up with the latest and greatest. In 1981, it was "do it practical" on set, and we did. I have relationships with some very talented filmmakers. Things could be done today to enhance the narrative and production of *EVILSPEAK* that we couldn't even imagine back then. I have written a script that works very well for that. There's a young, talented director, John Lechago, whom I would like to see direct the film. He would do a spectacular job! We are just completing a film he directed called *FEAST OF FEAR*, and I know what he can do. As a practical matter, it would make sense financially, given the number of fans who want to see a re-

make and the new ones it would attract.

DELIRIUM: Why did it take so long for you to direct another horror picture, which came in the form of the underrated *HYENAS*?

WESTON: Variety is the spice of life. I never found something that was intriguing to me. Writing *HYENAS* was a challenge.

DELIRIUM: You went for a different spin on lycanthropy with "were-hyenas" that cackle once in a while, but they never go tongue-in-cheek. Was there a mythology you based them on?

WESTON: What I was after was the phenomenon of people disappearing across the country every year. It is in the thousands—that's a fact. Where did they go? What happened to them? Also, the urban legend of shapeshifting creatures that are witnessed from time to time was something I wanted to explore. According to those in the crypto world, these hominids really do exist; they shapeshift into the appearance of hyenas. Telling this story was appealing to me.

DELIRIUM: Casting is key for any film, and the addition of Costas Mandylor gave

you marketing strength based off him being in the highly lucrative *SAW* franchise. But the late Meshach Taylor steals the show and proves he was a versatile actor.

WESTON: *HYENAS* was my third film with Costas, whom I consider a friend. He is a good actor fully committed to his craft. We have a good professional rapport, which makes it easy to work with each other. That was my first film with Meshach, but interestingly, I had met him about ten years ago in Peru where I was scouting for a film and he was working on



one. We stayed at the same hotel and we met [in the bar] and became friends. He was a wonderful man and a model professional with a huge amount of talent. I will miss him.

Christa Campbell has a good following, and don't forget Bar Paly. She is gorgeous and talented. You see her briefly at the end as one of the two hyena girls in the bar, and then in the final scene in the car. Her career is growing, as she has been in *PAIN & GAIN*, *NON-STOP* and *MILLION DOLLAR ARM*.

DELIRIUM: Did you make a conscious choice to shoot Campbell's nude scenes mostly in shadows and fog?

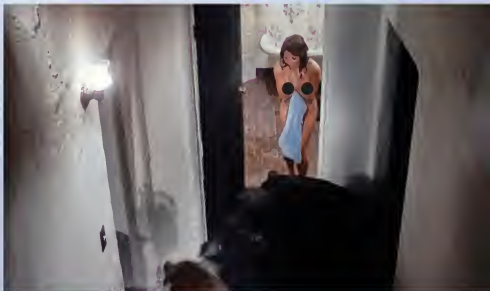


WESTON: We actually shot Christa nude and added fog digitally after the fact. I felt that full frontal was too overt. Seeing less and sensing more was better in those moments.

DELIRIUM: How much of the flick employs John Carl Buechler's practical makeup FX, and how much is computer-generated imagery?

WESTON: I would credit the computer 60 percent and John percent. It is amazing what the computer can do and it's all advanced, even in the last few years. *HYENAS* was shot on 35mm, and it's the last movie I'll ever do on film. I'm 100 percent converted to digital. Film is almost gone, and tape is truly dead. I enjoy the digital process—production and postproduction. There's so much creative and technical flexibility that it's hard to imagine working any other way.

DELIRIUM: The glowing red eyes on the



hyenas go a long way to giving them an identity, and an almost demonic personality.

WESTON: It's an effect that's been used before, but I thought it would add another dimension to the creatures.

DELIRIUM: The one thing missing from the DVD sleeve for *HYENAS* is "From the director of *EVILSPEAK*," which might explain why the movie flew under many fans' radar in 2011. With the glut of hybrid cinema being made over the last several years, perhaps Lionsgate should have pushed that angle harder when they promoted it.

WESTON: I agree! The marketing probably should have been handed over to you. It seems it didn't occur to anyone to go for that hook. Lionsgate might call you after they read this...



In the horror cinema of the 21st century, the current collection of actresses and models referred to as "scream queens" have usually been women who have always played the victim in fright films; it is rare to find a female screen personality who transcends that image to stand equally alongside established icons like Christopher Lee and Vincent Price. But Barbara Steele remains unique, as she seems to have always been an icon or, more to the point, a fetish object of ambiguous ecstasies ever since she was cast by Mario Bava back in 1960 to play dual roles in his signature film *LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO*, or, as it is known in the States, *BLACK SUNDAY*.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Barbara Steele personally as a friend, from around the time she did *PIRANHA*

David Del Valle's **CAMP GRINDHOUSE**

"THE LEGEND OF BARBARA STEELE"

BY DAVID DEL VALLE



for Joe Dante. In that passage of time, I have watched Barbara soften her attitude toward her genre films, especially the dozen or so movies she did in Italy during the 1960s' "dolce vita" days of Roman filmmaking.

One of the best-realized projects to address her legacy thus far was produced by Clive Baker, for whom we both appeared as on-camera subjects in an episodic BBC documentary that also became a book, titles *CLIVE BAKER'S A TO Z OF HORROR*. It was decided by the producers that I would discuss her most bizarre and interesting horror outing of that period, *THE HORRIBLE DR. HICCOCK*. This film has quite a reputation with the critics as well as the fans as a surreal masterpiece of forbidden desire. The film deals quite openly with necrophilia which is a subject rarely touched upon, even today. I believe one of the reasons these Italian films got away with so much in the way of perverse subtext was that nobody in Hollywood was paying any attention to Eurohorror in the '60s; all

these films were released very much under the radar, so even though they were shown all over the world, very little was written about them at the time.

All that was about to change after Barbara's debut as a vampire/witch in *BLACK SUNDAY*, thanks to a French magazine called *Midi-Minuit Fantastique*, edited by two wealthy and whip-smart film buffs named Michel Caen and Jean-Claude Romer. This landmark magazine, which openly discussed sexuality and bondage in horror films, managed to publish 24 issues over a period of just under a decade. Barbara Steele was elevated to such an iconic status by Caen that he never forgot her power, even at the time of his death last year. All 24 issues are being reprinted in



four hardcover volumes in France, and Barbara and I have been working toward seeing if an English version can be done as well. Caen's death has stalled that process a bit, but hopefully, this amazing collection of articles and rare European stills can be made available to the legions of American horror fans in the not too distant future.

The advent of Blu-ray has created an exciting phase in disc presentations, so we are finally seeing some of Barbara's Italian horror films as they were meant to be seen, uncut and widescreen in some cases: *THE LONG HAIR OF DEATH* (for which our editor provides both a video love letter to Barbara as passionate liner notes), *CASTLE OF BLOOD* and *NIGHTMARE CASTLE* are already available, and plans are in the works for Barbara and I to record brand new audio commentaries for all three, beginning with *NIGHTMARE CASTLE*. It is a shame that for all the pressings of both the Italian and American versions of *BLACK SUNDAY*, Barbara has yet to do a commentary for it; either they can't afford her, or they just feel she





the subtexts he could, including demonic possession and dual roles, and shot the film in the very villa where **DR. HICHCOCK** was made a year or two before. Mario also hired Ennio Morricone to score the film, creating an erotic melodrama that is well worth the time of any of her fans.

After filming the rarely seen and quite effective possession tale **AN ANGEL FOR SATAN** in 1966, Barbara left Italy to marry screenwriter James Poe and relocate to Hollywood, where she would make fewer horror films, and years later eventually become a producer for Dan Curtis, also a force in the genre with TV's **DARK SHADOWS** and his wildly popular **NIGHT STALKER** telefilms and series. When I first met Barbara, I was still a theatrical agent in Century City, so I decided to work with her professionally.

The first film I secured for her was Denny Harris' **SILENT SCREAM**, which was a rather old-fashioned thriller about a boarding house filled with—what else?—college students. Barbara was hired to play a demented killer with no dialogue

after the film had already been shot. Denny decided the movie needed to be reworked, so Barbara was on it for a week, and it made a lot of money. Years later, we would do an audio commentary for it to match one the director had done earlier. I focused the first half of the running time to discussing her other horror films, until the last 20 minutes when she finally appears on screen. Scorpion is supposed to release the Blu-ray edition sometime this year.

The second commentary we did last year was for the British label Odeon, which unearthed a stunning uncut print of Tigon's **CURSE OF THE CRIMSON ALTAR**, also known in the U.S. as **THE CRIMSON CULT**. This film is well-known to horror fans, since it has the dream cast of Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee and Michael Gough, with Barbara looking amazing in blue-green makeup with a ram's headpiece, playing a witch who leads a coven in the film's dream sequences. Barbara had no scenes with Karloff or Lee, so the film is disappointing



might be bored with discussing her most famous film. Well, I am here to tell you she is prepared to talk about the film, if there is enough interest after the current disc presentations of both the Italian and American versions already on the market.

NIGHTMARE CASTLE is not the best film in the canon of Barbara's Italian horrors, but it is important for two reasons. One, she is in practically every frame of the movie, playing yet another dual role, again shot in black and white like most of her best films, and two, it presents itself as the black widow spider atop her legacy as the undisputed Queen of Italian Horror. Mario Caiano, the director of **NIGHTMARE CASTLE**, had admired Barbara's films for years, so when he put together this tone poem to her image, he added all





in that respect, yet it remains a time capsule of the late '60s.

Once again, I was forced to create a dialogue about her career in the genre rather than do a scene-specific track, since she literally had very little to say about the film except for memories of meeting Karloff, whom she adored, and spending time with Lee, who became a good friend since they had both made a number of films in Italy. Barbara told me she would have these lunches with Lee where they would drink wine and discuss making a horror film themselves and do it right. Sadly, they never again had the opportunity to work together again. Kino Lorber is releasing the DVD *Statedie* with our commentary intact.

Barbara finally had a chance a few years ago to star in a horror film that was to have been made in Italy by a first-time director named Jonathan Zarantonello. After several meetings, Barbara was told the film was not going to be made in Italy, and so *THE BUTTERFLY ROOM* was shot in Los Angeles, set in the present day as kind of a return to the slasher motif she did once before in *SILENT SCREAM*. Barbara dominates every frame of the movie, proving how well she can perform when given the chance. The film itself is more of a thriller about a demented mother in the *DIE! DIE! MY DARLING!* tradition of Hammer films, in which icons like Bette Davis and Joan Crawford would torment

their offspring. Jonathan populated the film with actresses who had appeared in '80s horror franchises like *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* and *FRIDAY THE 13TH*. The film played in LA and New York and then went to DVD; it is well worth a look just to see Barbara in a tour-de-force performance.

More recently, Barbara has embarked on a new career as a voice artist, starring with the late Jonathan Frid in a *DARK SHADOWS* project written especially for them. Barbara enjoyed the experience enough that when she was asked to do the voice of a ghost in an animated short entitled *THE MILL AT CALDER'S END*, she was thrilled to do it, also because she was impressed with the director, Kevin McTurk. The model used for Barbara's character is a stunning replica of her role as the princess in *BLACK SUNDAY*. She also did voice work on a short stop-motion film called *THE SHUTTERBUG MAN*, made by a Canadian named Chris Walsh and featuring a music score by *DELIRIUM* editor Chris Alexander. Barbara is planning to do more of these kinds of projects if they have style, wit and a Gothic sensibility.

Barbara Steele has secured herself a



place among the giants of the horror genre with a career that has endured the test of time, and her fans are loyal and devoted to her image as a dark diva of the macabre. I have had the pleasure of watching this remarkable woman for a good part of my life, and she has never ceased to surprise me with her beauty, style and energy. In 2013, she was approached by actor Ryan Gosling to appear in *LOST RIVER*, his first film as a director. He was scouting locations in Detroit when he finally reached Barbara with an offer to play Belladonna, a strange, silent



character, and when the movie was screened at the Cannes Film Festival, almost every review singled out Barbara's cameo as something special.

Phil Hardy, in his wonderful *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORROR MOVIES*, wrote perhaps the best description of why we admire Barbara's work so much: "The face of Steele explains why her mere presence suffices to trigger the perverse but fundamental and pleasurable fantasies that form the raw material of the horror genre itself and why her image, more than any other, is the emblem and the fetish of the genre."

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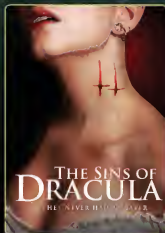
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LOVE AT FIRST BITE/ONCE BITTEN (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)

1979 was the year of Dracula. Universal unleashed John Badham's critically dismissed adaptation of the Hamilton Deane stage play, starring Frank Langella (an incredibly undervalued film, but that's a

beau is a bloodsucking vampire. Much hilarity ensues, most of it provided by the great Benjamin, who, in one scene, bungles an assassination attempt by shooting the Count with silver bullets, confusing werewolf execution with vampire dispatching.

On the second half of Scream Factory's oddball double bill (LOVE should really have had its own release) is the brain-dead but somehow likable '80s trash comedy ONCE BITTEN, the



rant for another column); German art-house wunderkind Werner Herzog cranked out his austere remake of Murau's NOSFERATU; and then there was LOVE AT FIRST BITE, the most successful Drac of the pack, starring George Hamilton. And while LOVE is the least of the films in terms of serious horror credentials, it's a masterpiece of a different kind and is just as funny now as it was 35 years ago.

The film casts deep-tanned Hamilton as a suave, rubber-faced Count Dracula; evicted from his castle by enterprising villagers who want to convert it into a gymnasium, he bails on Transylvania and heads to New York. Once there, the film amusingly riffs on the fish-out-of-water dynamic of a vampire lost in the even more depraved wilds of The Big Apple, until the suddenly disco-savvy ghoul locks on a flaky model (Susan Saint James) whom he believes is the love of his life. Meanwhile, her arrogant shrink/ex-lover (Richard Benjamin) slowly gets wise to the fact that his former flame's new

first major film to star future comedy superstar Jim Carrey. In it, the awesomely hot Lauren Hutton is a cougar vampire queen who needs the blood of a virgin to sustain her existence. She finds that blood in the veins of a horny teen (Jim Carrey) who gets bitten by the bloodsucker during a blowjob and then starts wearing sunglasses, dying his hair and wearing all black. The usual antics ensue, and make no mistake, ONCE BITTEN, well, sucks. But it is such a flaming artifact of its time, and the casting is so bizarre (Cleavon Little has fun as Hutton's gay butler/familiar) that it's never less than entertaining.

Scream Factory provides trailers for both films and radio spots for LOVE AT FIRST BITE, and both films boast crisp HD anamorphic transfers.

—Chris Alexander

NEW YEARS EVIL (Scream Factory, Blu-ray)

If one finds a tackier film than 1980's NEW YEAR'S EVIL, this writer wants to see it; otherwise, I won't believe it. This dumb, sleazy and trashy non-classic mysteriously gets its own Blu-ray release from Scream Factory, as opposed to a stacked double-shot release it probably should have received—and man, is it cheesy. "Actress" Roz Kelly (Fonzie's girlfriend Pinky Tuscedero on HAPPY DAYS) stars as an aging new-wave rock-and-roll TV personality who, while hosting a massive international New Year's Eve TV special, finds herself stalked by a murderer who promises to kill a woman each time midnight unfolds all over the world—and makes good on that promise.

Looking like an overlit TV movie, filled with overacting by a C-list cast and offer-



ing a big plot twist that is as birdbrained as the rest of the picture, NEW YEAR'S EVIL is a great midnight flick—a real-deal sublimely bad movie that is unrelenting in its crass mediocrity. It apparently has a following (doesn't everything?) and Scream Factory knows this; they paid this gorgeously packaged fossil (with the usual nicely reversible cover art) with tons of extras from the cast and crew, more than a dirty-trick flick like NEW YEAR'S EVIL deserves.

A good party movie that is anything but good.

—Ben Cortman

GOD TOLD ME TO: AN APPRECIATION

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

There's no one quite like writer, director and all-around genre-film visionary Larry Cohen. Cohen is, of course, the man behind such fare as the blaxploitation action classic *BLACK CAESAR*, the terrifying and outrageous *IT'S ALIVE* films, the riotous *O: THE WINGED SERPENT*, the gleefully ridiculous *THE STUFF* and many, many more sly works of deranged, socially aware filmmaking that betray their low budgets, compensating with big ideas and craftsmanship. But among Cohen's storied canon, perhaps no film is as starkly effective as his 1976 existential sci-fi/horror chiller *DEMON* or, as it is more commonly known, *GOD TOLD ME TO*. It's a film like no other, and a picture that only Cohen could make work.

The setting is present-day (well, 1976 present-day) New York City. As the film opens, the audience is treated to guerrilla-style shots of real Manhattan streets as random people suddenly drop to the pavement, feigning death while authentic passersby double back in shock. Such permit-free filmmaking stunts might raise ire today, but Cohen didn't worry about such things then: He simply dove in. In the context of the narrative, these plants are innocent victims of an unseen sniper, nestled somewhere up high and taking out assorted citizens with skilled aplomb. Enter Detective Peter Nicholas (Tony Lo Bianco of *THE FRENCH CONNECTION*), who arrives on the scene after cops locate the shooter on the top of a water tower. Fearlessly, Nicholas climbs the tower to confront the killer, a mild-mannered, pleasant fellow who shows no remorse for the grim killing spree. And when, after some defusing discourse, the kindly detective inquires as to why

he committed the crimes, the shooter simply says, "God told me to," before diving off the tower to his death.

Nicholas is a Catholic struggling with his faith and feelings of purpose—a kind of midlife crisis that finds its apex with this and an ensuing spate of similar crimes that all end with the perpetrators beaming, "God told me to." Lo Bianco gives what would be the defining performance of his career, brilliantly conveying a man who cannot fathom why a father would ruthlessly butcher his wife and small children, or why a decorated policeman (a very young, pre-TAXI Andy Kaufman) would go on a homicidal rampage during the St. Paddy's Day Parade, all in the name of serving a God that he himself has had a tortured relationship with. With his handsome, dark features, the actor's torment and downspiraling is palpable, and we stay with him as his investigation

gets darker and weirder, culminating in a revelation that is as outrageous and improbable as it is imaginative and intelligent.

GOD TOLD ME TO is a New York movie, a Cohen joint, through and through, capturing the urgency of the city as well as its sprawl and desperation. The director paints a portrait of a world teetering on the edge of sanity and salvation, perfectly housing a story that ultimately deals with the cosmic war between good and evil, the eternal battle for the soul of mankind. This is, as the title and themes suggest, very much a theological horror film, but it is bigger than that—galactic, in fact. Unlike most religion-oriented horror films of the period—pictures like *THE EXORCIST*, *THE OMEN* and *THE SENTINEL*—*GOD TOLD ME TO* ultimately abandons the confines of a single faith, and this is the film's most genius device.

A Muslim or a Hindu or a Buddhist watching *THE EXORCIST* might thrill to the craft and shocks, but the underlying Catholicism would be somewhat lost and come off as lightweight. Here, however, Cohen has loftier narrative and conceptual pursuits, which defy denomination and culture and directly attack what it means to be a human being, subject to vice and struggle.

Wrapped up with a Bernard Herrmann-esque score by Frank Cordell, *GOD TOLD ME TO* is Cohen's ultimate masterpiece, as heavy and vital a work as it was 40 years ago...maybe even more so. Really, there is no other horror film quite like it.

GOD TOLD ME TO is out now in a Blu-ray release from Blue Underground, packed with special features including a revealing commentary by Cohen.



COLLECTING FULL MOON

One Toronto filmmaker and genre-movie addict has amassed an impressive collection indeed...

By JAY CLARKE

It was during my tenure as a teenage video-store jockey that I was indoctrinated into the world of Full Moon Entertainment. I had, of course, seen some titles from earlier Charles Band enterprises (Empire, Wizard et al.), but I was then unaware they were all the brainchildren of one diabolical mastermind. It was fortunate that our location (one of a chain called Major Video that was later swallowed up by Blockbuster) was buying whatever Band was selling, and one fateful day in early 1991, PUPPET MASTER II appeared on our shelf.

Being that I devoured any new horror title that arrived, I took PMII home and was immediately smitten. The plot was bizarre, but the premise captured my imagination. The mix of puppetry and stop-motion really popped, and I loved that each of the puppets had its own personality. I also instantly responded to the score (which I subsequently purchased) by Richard Band.

When the movie was over, much to my delight, on came a featurette entitled

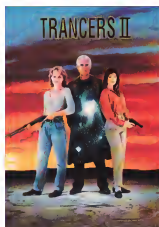
VideoZone. Band himself appeared on screen and announced that he was pulling back the curtain, and every Full Moon release would also include a 10-minute behind-the-scenes video about what was currently going on with his company. This was unprecedented at the time, as back then, you were lucky if there was even a trailer on a VHS rental. We are spoiled now, but outside of the laserdisc market, there was nothing like this back then.

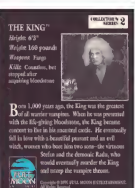
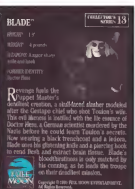
This was ultimately where I learned about the Full Moon Fan Club, and I was quick to join. I have to confess that they were the recipients of the only fan letter I have ever written—which, truth be told, was basically me rambling on about how much I loved Charlie Spradling.

I would see all of these amazing titles while at the video store, and acquired over a dozen Full Moon posters as a result. My collection ballooned when I started getting stuff regularly through the Fan Club, including T-shirts, postcards, comics and even a 12-inch resin statue of Blade. Look around these pages for examples of that collection...

I haven't kept up with the enormous output of Full Moon titles over the years, but I still return to the PUPPET MASTER films every so often, as they are perhaps one of the best mixes of horror, fantasy and comedy in existence.







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PANELS OF PAIN

PUPPET MASTER returns to the four-color format
courtesy of Action Lab Comics.

By BEN CORTMAN



As you've no doubt heard, Action Lab Comics has revived and reinvented Full Moon's PUPPET MASTER franchise for a new line of serious-minded comic books. Written by Action Lab honcho Shawn Gabborin and illustrated by artist Michela Da Sacco, the PUPPET MASTER books take the beloved characters to places previously unexplored in the films, and are authentic

labors of love by its creators.

DELIRIUM hung out with the enthusiastic Gabborin to pick his skull about turning PUPPET MASTER into prime pulp fiction.

DELIRIUM: Why was the time right for another PUPPET MASTER comic?

SHAWN GABBORIN: PUPPET MASTER, to me, is a dream project. Other comic

writers may aim to write SPIDER-MAN or SUPERMAN, and that's great; it's just not me. Growing up, Full Moon was the first movie company that I paid attention to and actually sought out films by. Every weekend, my friends and I would scour the video store looking for new Full Moon movies to rent, but always had PUPPET MASTER as a go-to.

Fast forward to 2013: I had been writing comics for almost 10 years at the time, and my wife got me PUPPET MASTER X for my birthday to round out my collection. I started to think about what I would do if I had the chance to write a PUPPET MASTER story. So in the course of the next week, I watched through the full 10-film series. After that, I knew exactly what story I wanted to tell. So I wrote up a pitch and contacted Full Moon to see if they would be interested in licensing out the comics rights. They were receptive to the idea, and a few hours later I was on the phone with their director of marketing, making my pitch.

I think now is the perfect time to bring the puppets to the comics page. It's interesting talking to fellow horror fans about where the genre currently stands. Right now, we are all very nostalgic but also want something fresh. I think with this comic, we can offer that! It's a continuation of the films, not a reboot, and provides a monthly dose of fresh puppet hijinks!

DELIRIUM: How closely to the films' mythology is the series adhering?

GABBORIN: Continuity is very important to me, so I'm starting in line with the film mythology. I may sidestep here and there to keep things fresh and add new wrinkles to the story, but the comic very much comes from the world the films set up. That being said, I have been very careful to keep the comic accessible for people who are unfamiliar with or may only have a passing knowledge of the series. The primary story takes place after the events of PUPPET MASTER: THE LEGACY, which was the last present-day sequel. So every thing that has come before that is in play, and I'll be picking up a number of threads from the films and bringing them into the comics. There isn't much I could say I'm looking to change, just build on. A big part of the second story arc is looking at who these characters were before they became the puppets, and how they fit into the world now.

DELIRIUM: The printed page also liberates you to explore a bigger visualization of the PM universe...

GABBORIN: Yes! One thing I love about working in the comics medium is that I have no special effects budget! If I want to show Tunneler drill into someone's ear and come out the other, I don't have to worry about how much that will cost, how to make it look real or even how to accomplish it. As long as my artist can draw it—and believe me, Michela has rocked anything I've thrown at her!—then I can do it. I can go nuts with the kills, which was always a hallmark of the PUPPET MASTER films anyway...but I can turn it up to 11.

DELIRIUM: What is the best PUPPET MASTER film, in your estimation?

GABBORIN: That's a tough call. My go-to films would be the first three. To narrow it down to one, I think I'd have to go with PUPPET MASTER 3. It's such a well-told story, the acting is solid, the kills are fun and it builds a lot of the mythology for the series.

DELIRIUM: Have you felt a swell in fan interest around the comics? Are people excited?

GABBORIN: The fans have been very supportive! A lot of people are sharing posts about it on social media and helping to spread the word further than I could ever reach. There seems to be a lot



of genuine excitement for the comics, and I couldn't be happier about that. It always makes me smile when someone

mentions a plot thread they would like to see more of, and I can say "Yep, you'll see that in the third story arc!"

DELIRIUM: What is the future for the series?

GABBORIN: As a general rule, I don't start writing a story until I know the end. In this case, where it's an ongoing series, I don't just know where the individual story arcs wind up, but I have a large, overarching plan in play for the foreseeable future. There is an endgame that we are building toward that should be a big, fun payoff for the fans. One thing I am proud of is that each story arc has something different to offer, but still serves the big picture. The first arc is more of a traditional PUPPET MASTER story, the second one takes a turn to a place the movies have never gone, and so on with the third and fourth arcs. As the comic moves forward, you'll see some familiar faces, some new ones and some old faces cast in a new light. If you have a favorite character that isn't "random Nazi #2," chances are we will at least touch on them. I really think people will dig what we're putting together here!

For more on the series, pay a visit to www.ActionLabComics.com.



Some of the strangest love to make it onto the big screen was not by way of the seedy 42nd Street, or even premium cable channels famous for late-night skin flicks. It found its way out there by way of one of the most famous movie monsters and beloved action-hero characters of all time.

I saw **KING KONG** when I was a kid, like everyone else I knew growing up. Being fascinated with the classic monsters like Frankenstein and the Wolf Man, I loved it. And, like most viewers, I felt sorry for the lovesick, misplaced monster.

It occurred to me after I got a bit older that **KING KONG** was really a creepier idea on a more visceral level than simply a giant ape coveting a beautiful girl and going on a rampage. The various films never pushed the issue; they usually just suggested that Kong had a more benign fascination with her than anything else. It was as though he had a desire to maybe protect her or keep her as his own. But apes are not very passive or benign when it comes to sexuality, and if we let our-

STRANGE LOVE

By BRIAN STEWARD

IN-APE-PROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

selves really think about it, we know that Kong's intentions were not to just look at her. There was no way this was going to end well for our heroine. What exactly was Kong going to do with her? Was it his plan all along to eventually rape her? How else could this possibly play out? If Kong was left to his devices, this was going to be far worse for her than a Chihuahua being mounted by a Great Dane.

The general idea of this fascination with the female is also safely toyed with in

the early Tarzan films and serials. It wasn't until the John Derek-directed gem, **TARZAN, THE APE MAN**, starring his wife, the stunning Bo Derek, that we saw this primal sexuality begin to play out on screen. Granted, unlike Kong, Tarzan is human, but his psychological makeup is born of his primate upbringing. Tarzan is, after all, basically an ape.

Is this the Tarzan-and-Jane relationship Edgar Rice Burroughs secretly imagined?

John Derek pulled no punches with the sexuality or nudity displayed in this early-'80s classic. Jane finds reason after reason

to get naked in this sexy jungle adventure. As soon as she is first spotted by Tarzan, bathing in the ocean, Jane becomes his fascination. In the sweeping, big-budget production, Tarzan is portrayed as a horny jungle man who can't keep his hand out of Jane's shirt and fondling her breasts. His attraction to Jane in this incarnation is purely sexual and very akin to what I believe was the true nature of King Kong's obsession with Fay Wray's character, Ann Darrow, and





the perverse undertones of that tale. In Derek's film, the ape has his moment as well, in the final frames. In a scene that John Derek and Warner Bros. surprisingly left in the final cut, we even see a chimpanzee curiously suck Bo Derek's nipple while she playfully laughs it off.

If we dare follow this trend to its ultimate realization in cinema, we need look no further than the bizarre jungle/sex/monster/fantasy film *TANYA'S ISLAND*. This insane cinematic mess puts the jungle-love narrative out in full view. Vanity, slumming it here as the titular character under the credited name D.D. Winters, is seemingly comfortable being used as nothing more than eye candy in this cinematic debacle that is part *KING KONG*, part *TARZAN* and all weird. The film follows Tanya and her adventure on a tropical island with her abusive boyfriend, Lobo. She discovers and becomes fascinated with a gorilla-like missing-link creature whom she names Blue Eyes.

Over the course of the film, Blue Eyes becomes equally interested in her. Ultimately, *TANYA'S ISLAND* plays out as a twisted rape fantasy, with the ape getting the girl in the worst possible way at the film's climax—pun intended.

In all honesty, the "Blue Eyes" creature suit is a stunningly crafted work of art, and seems entirely too sophisticated for the schizo sexploitation film it was built for. It was created by two masters of special makeup, Rick Baker and Rob Bottin—which makes sense, as Baker's past work included suit creation and performing the role of Kong himself in the 1976 *KING KONG* remake featuring Jessica Lange. If we dig deeper, we find that he also later worked on the epic *GREY-STOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN, LORD OF THE APES*. It seems a pattern is becoming clear and, if we have learned anything from this primate-sex journey, it may be that Rick Baker is the one we may need to be concerned about.



SADLER UP!

Character actor William Sadler is a master of all genres.

By JOHN NICOL



Very few actors find fame in every genre of cinema and do so as effectively as William Sadler, a cinema chameleon who has his roots firmly planted in many genres, having appeared in everything from *DIE HARD 2* to *TALES FROM THE CRYPT: DEMON NIGHT* and *BORDELLO OF BLOOD* to *THE SHAW-SHANK REDEMPTION*. Hell, he even played the president in *IRON MAN 3*, not to mention his current role on TV's *THE FLASH*.

DELIRIUM salutes the many faces of Sadler and is honored to have had some time to chat with him here, in our wild periodical. Have a read...

DELIRIUM: You famously played Colonel Stuart in *DIE HARD 2*. What was it like to work on such a large-scale film, and how did it change things for you, professionally?

WILLIAM SADLER: *DIE HARD 2* was a pretty big-budget film at the time, al-

though it seems small by today's standards. I had never worked on anything with that many moving parts. We changed locations many times, chasing the melting snow, and each time we moved the rented 747 that appears in the film, it was like an army on maneuvers or some great invasion force. We needed snow and an airport that we could partially shut down. New as I was to film, everything about this picture seemed huge and impressive to me. They also built half of a 747 on a soundstage at Fox so they could control the weather. Rear-screen projections of a runway flying under us, refrigerated air so you saw our breath, huge fans and fake snow and *voilà*, a fight on a wing in a winter storm. After *DIE HARD 2*, I was a lot more visible in Hollywood. Other jobs started to arrive as I got on the radar.

DELIRIUM: Did you do your own stunts, and did you know any martial arts prior to making the film?

SADLER: As far as the stunts went, I did some of them, but had great doubles in Monty Cox and Randy Hall to sell the really tough or dangerous stuff. The high-speed snowmobile jumps, etc. were Monty with me cut in here and there, and the fight on the wing was a brilliant mix of me, Monty and Randy. Both of them are expert martial artists, while I had just started my training a few months before. Randy's skill and precision with spinning kicks made it look like Bruce [Willis] was getting creamed without anyone worrying that I would kick him in the face by accident. The rule is, if you're seeing Bruce's face, it's Randy's boot that just swept by it, and if you're seeing my face, chances are that's Bruce's stunt double I'm kicking. I also studied with Benny "The Jet" Urquidez for the fights in the film, and he choreographed the nude "kata" that I did

in the hotel room.

DELIRIUM: Dennis Hopper's *THE HOT SPOT* is a cult fave and loved by many. What was that experience like?

SADLER: That was one of my first films, and director Dennis Hopper sort of took me under his wing—mentor as well as director. He drew that performance out of me. We had long talks about "the craft," his work with James Dean and acting for the cameras. Invaluable lessons from one of the greats.

DELIRIUM: You teamed up with Walter Hill on *TRESPASS*; was it fun to play a firefighter in the wrong place at the wrong time?

SADLER: *TRESPASS* was an interesting film in a couple ways. Walter Hill had sort of launched my career in LA by casting me as Niles Talbot in the first episode of



TALES FROM THE CRYPT, so we had a nice working relationship. Like Dennis Hopper, he taught me a lot about working for a camera. And no one does action and suspense better than Walter.

DELIRIUM: What was it like working with Bill Paxton and such a diverse cast?

SADLER: Great fun. Bill Paxton and I spent the entire shoot diving behind things, dodging bullets. There was a special-effects marksman on the set with an air rifle, shooting at us whenever gunplay happened. When you see those sparks and hits landing all around us in the film, that's the man with the air rifle chasing us around with dust-and-zirconium balls. There's a fun moment where Bill is looking out a window at what he thinks are police coming to save us, he turns his head away to call me over and the effects

guy put a steel ball bearing in the window right where his head was. He turns back to the glass and sees that the "hit" is between his eyes, and a split second later, I tackle him out of frame as the window explodes with more hits. Lots of trust and skill on the part of the effects team, headed up by coordinator Joe Digaetano.

DELIRIUM: Jumping ahead, you landed the role of President Matthew Ellis in *IRON MAN 3*. Were you excited to be part of Marvel's universe?

SADLER: *IRON MAN 3* was fantastic to work on. I'd never dealt with flying rigs and greenscreens before, so I felt like a kid at an amusement park when I was on those sets. Wearing "the suit" and being harnessed, wired up and flown around the stage was like no film I'd ever done before. I was having so much fun, I'd have to keep reminding myself of the president's dire predicament. Otherwise, I'd just be grinning like a kid on a roller-coaster. I also liked working with director Shane Black. I always felt that as big as the film was, he had his arms around it. Also, after the first few weeks of filming,



the crew started humming "Hail to the Chief" whenever I stepped on the stage. I'm still smiling...

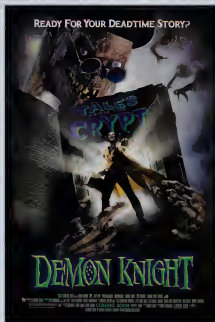
DELIRIUM: You've had quite the presence on the small screen as well—for instance, Luther Sloan on *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*. Was it fun playing a character everyone loves to hate?

SADLER: Like everybody else, I grew up

on the original *STAR TREK* series, so I was excited when they asked to be in *DEEP SPACE NINE*. *STAR TREK* is a huge part of our culture, and I wanted to be part of it. I liked the character of Luther Sloan for a couple of reasons. First, he had those really creepy entrances where Dr. Bashir would wake up and he would just be sitting there watching him. Unnerving and creepy, right? How long has he been sitting there? I loved it. He also injected the idea of a secret organization, Section 31, that worked for the Federation, but didn't play by the rules and answered to no one. It may have been inspired by the Oliver North scandal: people who break the law to protect the Federation. I did three episodes before my character killed himself to avoid capture.

DELIRIUM: Do you get much love from *STAR TREK* fans?

SADLER: *STAR TREK* fans are pretty dedicated people. I did a convention in Las Vegas a few years back, and met fans who had started their own "Section 31" chapter with its own bylaws and constitution. They even designed and built black leather uniforms like the one Sloan wore. Amazing.



APOCALYPSE [REC]

The fourth entry in the long-running Spanish horror series is the weirdest.

By SEAN PLUMMER

Director Jaume Balagueró brought more infectious mayhem to the screen last year with [REC] 4: APOCALYPSE. The final installment in the Spanish film series begun by Balagueró and Paco Plaza, it world-premiered as part of the Midnight Madness section in last fall's Toronto International Film Festival, which spotlights the craziest genre movies from around the world.

This entry picks up where 2009's [REC] 2 ended—SPOILER ALERT—shortly after TV reporter Ángela Vidal (Manuela Velasco) is infected with the grublike parasite that has caused the residents of the apartment building in which she is trapped to transform into rage-fueled psychos (not zombies) hell-bent on maiming and killing all those around them. As [REC] 4 opens, Ángela wakes up on board a cargo ship which has been turned into a floating lab run by Dr. Ricarte (Héctor Colomé). He is determined to discover the source of the outbreak, but the doctor's plans go awry when an infected monkey escapes and spreads the virus to the soldiers guarding the ship. This leaves Ángela and the uninfected in a fight to stay alive, even while the audience wonders if the heroine is still hosting the evil parasite.

[REC] 4 is a return to the serious horror that marked the first two [REC] films, after the comic diversion that was 2012's [REC] 3: GENESIS (directed solo by Plaza). It also largely eschews the found-footage style of that duo in favor of straightforward narrative filmmaking. In this wide-ranging interview, Balagueró, with the aid of a translator, discusses the

decision to explain the parasite scientifically, the American [REC] remake QUARANTINE, why his antagonists are not zombies, and what he is working on next. (Yes, it is horror; no, it does not involve ghouls.)

DELIRIUM: What was your and Paco's reaction to the success of the first [REC]? **JAUME BALAGUERÓ:** Very surprised. We made the movie and didn't know what to expect from it. It was an experiment, and very risky for us. It was a very cheap movie. We were trying to make something different, but we weren't sure about the final result. And then, when the film became a big success, we were very surprised. We premiered it at a festival in Venice [the 64th annual Venice Film Festival], and the reactions were great, and then it had success again at the box office. It got really big, and we were very, very surprised.

DELIRIUM: Did you always envision a series of [REC] films, or was that decided after the success of the first one?

BALAGUERÓ: No, the idea was to make one movie, [REC]. Due to its success, we had a number of ideas about how to keep developing the plot, and we decided to make a second one. Then, after a while, talking with the producers, the possibility arose to make two more films, the third and the fourth, the final chapters—one directed by Paco Plaza and the other directed by me.

DELIRIUM: The first two films were mostly comprised of handheld footage, but [REC] 3 was a more typical narrative feature. [REC] 4 is also mostly narrative,



although it incorporates security-camera shots. Talk about that deviation in approach for the last two films.

BALAGUERÓ: We decided to change the style of the movies because we thought that with the first two, we achieved all we could with it. We made it and it worked, and that was OK. I believe the audience always needs something different, not to repeat the same thing. [REC] is done, [REC] 2 is done. Let's make another thing—a different one not expected by the audience.

[We were] trying to make something... even changing the genre. The first one is a subjective, strong horror movie; the second was more horror with action; the third was like a comedy. For the fourth, we decided to make something mixing horror with action and adventure and emotion—a lot of different things. The idea, again, is to always make something different.

DELIRIUM: Paco Plaza is listed as a creative producer on [REC] 4; you were a creative consultant on [REC] 3. What does that mean?

BALAGUERÓ: In the case of [REC] 3, I was not completely out of the thing; I was kind of involved, and Paco asked me for advice. I was kind of involved in the movie, and the same with Paco for [REC] 4. We kept each other involved in the movies.

DELIRIUM: [REC] 3 divided many fans of the first two films. What did you think of it?

BALAGUERÓ: I loved the movie, because it was very different from what people were expecting. A lot of people were



expecting a strong, serious horror movie, but they found this comedy/parody/satire and decided this was not what they were looking for or expecting. As a movie, I believe the film works very well. It's fun; I love it.

DELIRIUM: What kind of movie were you hoping to make with [REC] 4, compared to its predecessors?

BALAGUERÓ: We wanted to make another kind of movie, not the same as the first and second. We tried to keep the most important elements of the saga: the claustrophobia, the horror, the plot and the main character.

A lot of people were curious: What was the origin of this virus? And then we decided, OK, let's start the fourth one in the final moments of the second one. And then we explain what happens next and try to explore the origin and discover what's really going on with this infection and the virus.

DELIRIUM: Talk about the religious aspect of the series. That was very prominent in the second film, but is downplayed in [REC] 4.

BALAGUERÓ: The explanation involves science and religion, which are confronted in the first one and the second one. Then we had to decide which was the winner in this case, and we figured that science would win, because the Church would perceive this strange thing as the devil. But there is an explanation, and the explanation is this parasite. It could be that this parasite, if you think about it, is the devil; no one really knows the devil's true shape.

We were interested in making something more scientific in the fourth with the parasite—but it is not the typical kind. It's like an evil being that thinks and that plans, and that was very interesting to me.

DELIRIUM: Do you consider the antagonists in the [REC] films to be zombies?

BALAGUERÓ: No. Zombies are the dead come back to life, and in this case they are just infected by some kind of disease—a



rage disease, or something, but not exactly zombies. But it's true that people usually talk about zombies when they refer to infected people [in movies].

DELIRIUM: Talk about working with Manuela Velasco. Why was she the right person to play Angela?

BALAGUERÓ: In the first movie she was perfect because, before the making of the film, she was a journalist, doing the same kind of reportage for television, and that's why we chose her. Since then, she's been perfect for the movies because she's beautiful and can be an action hero, like in the fourth, and she is someone very lovable for the audience.

DELIRIUM: You've spent a long time in the [REC] universe. Are you ready to move on?

BALAGUERÓ: Well, in fact, I made another movie in between [2011's SLEEP TIGHT], and now that I have finished the saga with [REC] 4, I have a lot of projects in mind, different kinds of movies to develop; nothing to do with zombies or

infected people.

DELIRIUM: [REC] was remade as QUARANTINE in the U.S. What do you think of that? Were you flattered?

BALAGUERÓ: Yeah, I felt flattered. At the time, it impressed me that an American studio wanted to remake a movie I made. But I had a very strange feeling when I saw QUARANTINE, because it's very difficult to tell what you feel about a movie that's based on something you made, and it's difficult to explain how you feel. It's not a bad thing. It's weird.

DELIRIUM: What are you working on next?

BALAGUERÓ: I have a new project for next year. It's an original horror movie, a thriller. It is very exciting for me. Also, I have a horror project based on a Spanish novel [LA DAMA NÚMERO TRECE by José Carlos Somoza]. Very, very exciting. Very innovative horror. It's a story based on the myth of the Muses. He's a very well-known, prestigious author, though not a horror writer.



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PHOTO GALLERY: EBOLA ZOMBIES

From Hong Kong comes first-time director Samuel Leong's graphically gory shocker **EBOLA ZOMBIES**, a title changed from the original **SARS ZOMBIES** after the more immediate threat of the Ebola virus swept the planet. In it, a gaggle of clueless thieves break into a lab and accidentally unleash a horde of infectious ghouls hungry for flesh and ripe disease. The expected bad stuff happens...

DELIRIUM has some exclusive, bloody pics from the impending Wild Eye DVD release. Have a look!



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A BRIEF HISTORY OF HORROR COMICS

Part Three: Dreamscapes and the Walking Dead (1982-Present)

Welcome back, ladies and germs, for our final installment of the History of Horror Comics. If you've made it this far with us, I commend you for your bravery, but the worst is yet to come! Strap on your helmet and take a dive down the pit of fear as your ghoulish host guides you to this epic's most despicable conclusion.

Dreamscapes and The Walking Dead

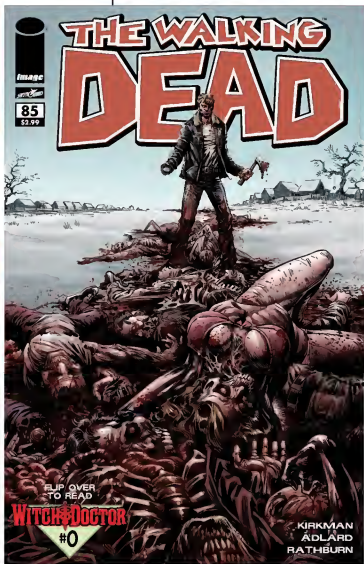
With the end of the 1970s, horror comics suddenly hit a hard decline in sales. Even given the relaxation of the Comics Code, horror comics were afflicted by a monster even they couldn't imagine: boredom. Audiences were growing weary of vampires and werewolves, and after surviving several wars both local and abroad, frankly, they were tired of being scared. Quick to notice the drop in inter-

est, publishers began to focus on the more popular superhero titles, and scary books quickly disappeared off the shelves. Oddly enough, the end of the '70s horror boom began around the time of the resignation of Richard Nixon, signaling the beginning of the end of government-inspired paranoia and the macabre entertainment that went with it.

Once again, all that changed with horror movies. As with earlier genre comics, a new wave of terror followed behind the popularity of its cinematic counterpart, particularly the grim films of the 1980s. Movies like *FRIDAY THE 13TH* and *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* brought a new audience of disaffected youth, one that grew up during the post-Nixon depression, forced to confront drugs and vio-

lence in the wake of political dis-sidence. With a new audience and a new era known as the Bronze Age, publishers began to slowly re-introduce horror comics into the fold.

Though there were a few attempts at bringing back the short morality tales of the older titles, it was the longer-running, character-oriented series that truly broke the mold of what the comics medium was capable of. Of the several new series that came out over that time, none were as influential or game-changing as DC's *SWAMP THING*. Originally just another character created during the 1970s' No-Code magazine frenzy, *Swamp Thing* was put on the back burner in 1976 as sales slowly dwindled, eventually ending up in semi-retirement. In 1982, DC, perhaps hoping to tap into the eco-horror market, brought back the hulking menace to roam across the darkened lands. In its first two

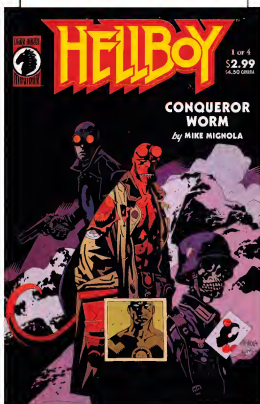




years, the title did moderately well, but ultimately stayed at the bottom of the revenue stream. With issue #20 and the introduction of new writer Alan Moore, however, the series' popularity exploded.

Relatively unknown at the time, Moore was scooped up by DC from the British comic anthology 2000 A.D. in the hopes that he could update Swamp Thing for the new audience. Given free rein, he and a series of artists deconstructed the character and rebuilt him from the ground up. Moore approached the project from a literary standpoint, aiming to create an overarching series that addressed social issues, ecological destruction, horror, magic, and fantasy. He created a character who was more than just a monster in the shadows, but one the audience could sympathize with and learn from, and might ultimately change their perspective about the world around them. SWAMP THING became a very visceral type of horror, an illustration of how humanity is the real monster and that hope and unyielding will is the only thing keeping us from killing each other. Over the next 34 issues, Moore managed to change the face of comics horror, influencing creators to this day.

Following this success, new waves of writers were brought from across the pond, beginning what has become known as the British Comic Invasion. Writers such as Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison, Garth Ennis and Peter Milligan put their own spins on classic and fresh characters, reinventing them for the new era. Soon, the comics world was flooded with a new

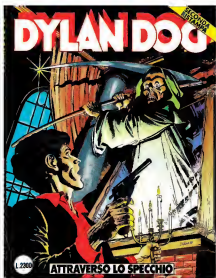


standard of horror and dark fantasy. Works such as SANDMAN and PREACHER showed the other side of religion and human emotions, while SHADE THE CHANGING MAN focused on the visual trip of being an otherworldly alien. Panels exploded with colors and bizarre creatures, tempting the audience to venture further into a world of dreams and nightmares; over in Italy, Tiziano Scavi intro-

duced the world to the black-and-white adventures of paranormal investigator Dylan Dog.

It was perhaps thanks to these authors that the comics industry soon saw another boom in all things four-paneled: the Modern Age. While Moore helped the transition between the ages, it was the follow-up creators who finally pinned the fickle interests of the readers onto the mounting board. With the success of the '90s Batman both in comic books and on the screen, interest in comics as collectables and a fond sense of nostalgia, comics were once again the hot item of the day. By the mid-'90s, new companies were popping up all over, introducing darker characters and storylines filled with angst and redemption. Brooding anti-heroes with equally brooding names like Spawn and Evil Ernie quickly became solid competitors for top-selling spots, and alternate, rare covers plastered the landscape, driving the market into new territories.

Yet just as with war, history is doomed to repeat itself, and the sharp rising market inevitably led to a sharp and devastating drop. As quickly as it began, the first Modern Age soon disappeared in the aftermath of a flooded market in which many products turned out to be not that collectible, leaving companies with overstocks of printed work that had become unsellable. The bigger players, i.e. Marvel and DC, were forced to dramatically cut staff and long-running characters (with Marvel officially declaring bankruptcy in 1996), while the smaller creators closed down altogether.



It was another dark time for the world of illustrated entertainment—but thankfully, there was a light at the end of the tunnel, once again in the form of flickering movie projectors.

Though the hit 2000 release of *X-MEN* helped begin to bring readers into the second Modern Age, it was a mix of horror movies and creator-owned comics work that relaunched a new wave of terror. Influential films like *THE RING*, *CABIN FEVER* and the pulsepounding *28 DAYS LATER* broke new ground in morbid cinema, opening a gaping wound of need that only comics, free of budget constraints, could provide. That particular end was fulfilled not by the larger companies but, refreshingly, by smaller, creator-owned businesses such as IDW, Image and Dark Horse. Focusing more on original stories and creator freedom, their titles took up the mantle of horror as the bigger companies began focusing on the booming superhero interest. Soon, the world was introduced to *30 DAYS OF NIGHT*, and the

already established *Hellboy* and his pals at the BPRD, among other tales too sordid to tell.

Of course, these too soon saw big-screen adaptations, creating a new tidal wave of comics-inspired movies that continues to this day. Despite the overwhelming success of this horror resurrection, though, it wasn't until writer Robert Kirkman came on the scene that a true phenomenon was born.

Kirkman introduced the world to the game-changing work *THE WALKING DEAD*. Centering the saga on both zombies and the terror of human survival, it was first released to moderate success among the hardcore horror brethren. As the series picked up steam, however, both readers and entertainment executives began to take notice of this seminal work, leading to one of the most successful TV shows in the history of horror. In fact, AMC's *WALKING DEAD* became so popular that the fifth-season premiere boasted a viewership of 17.3 million people, making it the most-watched drama telecast in cable history. Pushing the boundaries of TV violence, the series not only brought flesh-eating ghouls to the mainstream audience, it opened the door for both further televised comics adaptations and original terror work. It was thanks to the ability of a very talented creative crew, working from Kirkman's bible, to keep viewers coming back every week that we have the current influx of terror on the tube today.

Following in those footsteps, horror has begun to crawl into every aspect of the comics industry. Step into any comics shop, and you'll find menacing superheroes facing down their zombie counterparts, world-weary vampires and supernatural detectives on every shelf, each with a different story to tell. Rubbing elbows are reprints of older comics such as *CREEPY* and *EERIE*, along with new takes on vintage properties like *VAMPIRELLA* and *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*, sitting next to zombie

plushies, lunchboxes, statues and toys. Yes, it's quite the time to be alive.

Yet even as we get caught up this whirlwind of all things spooky and crawly, we must always worry how long the momentum of the second Modern Age will continue. With Marvel and DC planning movies well into the second half of the decade, comic-convention attendance at an all-time high and an unprecedented amount of comics-inspired television, it seems like this is a high we'll never come down from. Newer and more terrifying works are hitting the shelves every week, creating a horror market we haven't seen since the 1950s, but like its predecessors, the fandom is a fickle beast. What may be hot today could be in the 25-cent bin tomorrow. Perhaps we should just focus on the here and now, rejoice in the fact



that as long as we support growing communities of creators and original talent, we just might make this age outlast the previous ones. Living in the Internet era, we are able to create new fandoms and relight the old ones, creating a whole new way to communicate our mutual interests.

As long as we stay together, we can ride this wave straight into damnation.

Long live horror!

Long live the undead!

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EXTRAS

- Audio Commentary with Writer/Producer/Director **Larry Cohen**
- *Heaven & Hell On Earth* – Interview with Star **Tony Lo Bianco**
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BANDWIDTH

Dudes! How things change. And yet, the more they do, the more they continue to remain the same!

From the 35mm theatrical releases when I started in the mid-1970s, to the direct-to-VHS releases in the 1980s, to the direct-to-DVD releases in the 1990s, to rental stores vanishing just a few years ago and finally, to this very moment in time in which there appears to be no clear way to cost-efficiently release independent films at all! A new medium to get independent movies out to the fans seemed to always be there, at least for the four decades I've been making films. But now that companies like Netflix have figured out a way to aggregate and deliver "content" super-cheaply to their customers, the cash coming back to filmmakers is almost zero.

It sucks.

But, in the spirit of staying ahead of the

curve, we're trying a new approach to re-inventing how we release our films—with as much exposure as possible and to as many fans as possible: **THE WORLDWIDE STREAMING EVENT!**

As I write this, on a Monday, February 23, we're starting photography on the 4th **EVIL BONG** film: **EVIL BONG 420!** And we'll release it worldwide (!) on 04/20, with as many streaming sites showing the film as possible. So far we have Hulu, Vutopia, Amazon, Google and FullMaanStreaming on board. I hope to have at least 10 more sites be part of this event by the time April 20 is here. Just as in the past you would see ads for independent films available at Blackbuster, Hollywood Video, The Wherehouse and Tower Records, our ads for **EVIL BONG 420** will announce that you can stream it on Hulu, Amazon, Google, FullMaanStreaming and beyond.

Same idea, different medium for delivery!

To be the first to do something new is always a little scary. I was worried back in 1977 when I started the first independent home video company on the planet, Meda Home Entertainment. People were saying that nobody was going to pay \$50 to own a movie and see it more than once. I had licensed about 20 films at that time, and had borrowed most of that money. Luckily, the home video biz worked out....

Jump to almost 40 years later, and the World Streaming Premiere of **EVIL BONG 420!** Will it work? Will people watch it and therefore discover a new way to see our films? Or will we need to go back to the drawing board, bruised but not defeated—a little dazed, but not giving up hope as we sink temporarily into a state of **DEURIUM?**

—Charles Band



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